



## OPEN SOCIETY INSTITUTE Network Public Health Program

*This issue of the Network Public Health Program (NPHP) e-Newsletter highlights our work during the months of November, December, January and February, with upcoming events in March to May. We encourage information sharing to explore potential linkages and receive feedback. Suggestions and input are welcome. Contact Ellen Liu at [eliu@sorosny.org](mailto:eliu@sorosny.org). Please visit the NPHP website at [www.soros.org/health](http://www.soros.org/health)*

### Advocacy on Our Issues:

#### **Harm Reduction Advocates Join Forces to Postpone WHO Decision on Buprenorphine**

IHRD and other harm reduction advocates moved quickly upon learning that a WHO expert committee planned to reach a "final decision" in March on placing buprenorphine, a substitution treatment for opiate addiction and an important adjunct to HIV treatment, into a more restricted category. Within two days, more than 160 organizations from 41 countries endorsed a call for the WHO to conform to its own guidelines and consider scientific data and the experiences of non-governmental organizations before making a decision that might impact thousands of lives and the course of the HIV epidemic in Asia and the former Soviet Union. Contact: Daniel Wolfe, [dwolfe@sorosny.org](mailto:dwolfe@sorosny.org)

#### **IHRD Provides Expertise for Institute of Medicine Report**

An IHRD representative was among a small group of experts invited to present at the "Effectiveness of HIV prevention among Injecting Drug Users in High-Risk Countries" panel convened in December by the Institute of Medicine (IOM). The assessment by the IOM, perhaps the leading arbiter of scientific evidence in the United States, will result in a spring 2006 report. Contact: Daniel Wolfe, [dwolfe@sorosny.org](mailto:dwolfe@sorosny.org)

#### **Grants Support Advocacy, Communications, and Capacity Building on Key Sexual Health and Rights Issues**

SHARP awarded three grants for advocacy, networking, communications activities, and skills building on key sexual health and rights issues at the end of 2005. The first went to the Hungarian Civil Liberties Union for establishing country and regional advocacy hubs throughout Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union to promote and protect the health and human rights of sex workers. The second was to the International Committee on the Rights of Sex Workers in Europe to assist in the development of a rights based movement of European sex workers and their allies using website networking. The final grant was given to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission for the training of over 15 LGBT activists in utilizing the African Human Rights System to push for positive policy and legislative change to reduce stigmatization, violence, and harassment. Contact: Rachel Thomas, [rthomas@sorosny.org](mailto:rthomas@sorosny.org)

#### **Hungarian Hospice-Palliative Care Association Leads Effort to Integrate Palliative Care into Cancer Care**

Palliative care was included in the final version of the National Cancer Control Program of Hungary thanks to the efforts of the Board of the Hungarian Hospice-Palliative Care Association, an International Palliative Care Initiative grantee. This inclusion will help ensure that palliative care is an integral part of cancer care throughout the country. Contact: Sophie Pinkham, [spinkham@sorosny.org](mailto:spinkham@sorosny.org)

#### **OSI Launches Report on Roma Health Mediator Programs**

The report, *Mediating Romani Health: Policy and Program Opportunities*, was launched in December in Bucharest at an OSI-sponsored seminar, "Past and Future Projects and Policies: How to Impact Roma Health Most Effectively?" As many Eastern European Countries plan to initiate or expand Roma Health Mediator (RHM) programs, this timely study identifies the potential and challenges of RHM programs. The report assesses RHM models in Bulgaria, Finland, and Romania. Follow up advocacy is planned throughout the year to showcase the report to diverse policy audiences. To download the full report, go to:

[http://www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/roma/articles\\_publications/publications/romanihealth\\_20051201](http://www.soros.org/initiatives/health/focus/roma/articles_publications/publications/romanihealth_20051201)

Contact: Cristi Mihalache, [cmihalache@osi.hu](mailto:cmihalache@osi.hu)

### **Impact of the World Bank on Mainstreaming Romani Issues Report**

In an effort to explore more effective ways to address the Romani health agenda, OSI commissioned an assessment of the World Bank's lending program in the eight Decade countries plus Albania to examine the extent to which the Bank is supporting the mainstreaming of Romani issues within its portfolios for Human Development and Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development in Europe and Central Asia. The report provides a platform for partnering with the World Bank on Decade of Roma Inclusion goals and provides specific recommendations for improvements to address Roma health. To request a copy of the report, please contact: Heather Doyle, [hdoyle@sorosny.org](mailto:hdoyle@sorosny.org)

### ***Monitoring and Accountability:***

#### **Public Health Watch Holds TB Roundtable Meetings in Four Countries**

Between November and January, Public Health Watch (PHW) TB researchers from Tanzania, Thailand, Bangladesh, and Nigeria hosted in-country roundtable meetings to present the first drafts of their PHW TB monitoring reports for critique and feedback from key stakeholders, including representatives of regional and international NGOs, health care workers, academic researchers, journalists, and international donor agencies. Contact: Emily Bell, [ebell@sorosny.org](mailto:ebell@sorosny.org)

#### **Public Health Watch's U.S. HIV/AIDS Report Reviewed by Key Stakeholders**

Public Health Watch's draft report assessing U.S. HIV/AIDS policy was reviewed by key stakeholders at a roundtable meeting in February hosted by the OSI-DC office. In March, Morehouse College in Atlanta will host a second roundtable with the confirmed participation of former surgeon general Dr. David Satcher, as well as a forum on the state of AIDS in Black America. Contact: Helena Choi, [hchoi@sorosny.org](mailto:hchoi@sorosny.org)

#### **Public Health Watch Provides Input to UNAIDS Global Progress Report on Implementation of the UNGASS Declaration of Commitment**

In December, Public Health Watch submitted a summary of its findings and recommendations for each country in its TB Monitoring Project (Tanzania, Thailand, Bangladesh, Nigeria, and Brazil) to UNAIDS as input for its forthcoming Global Progress Report, with the aim of urging greater attention to TB/HIV during the UNGASS process. The Global Progress Report will help form the basis for discussions at the UNGASS Review Meeting in New York from May 31 to June 2. Contact: Rachel Guglielmo, [rguglielmo@sorosny.org](mailto:rguglielmo@sorosny.org)

#### **Diverse Models of Public Health Monitoring and Assessment Represented at Istanbul Conference**

Over 60 representatives from local, regional, and international NGOs and Soros foundations gathered in Istanbul February 8-10 to discuss current practices and perspectives on monitoring and assessment within the health sector. The meeting highlighted tactics and approaches that have worked well in health monitoring; explored more effective methods to connect monitoring to policy advocacy; and aimed to build synergy among existing and future public health monitoring efforts. An outcome of the meeting will be an OSI publication consisting of diverse public health monitoring case studies, stories and analyses, to be published within the year. For conference agenda and details, see: <http://health.osf.lt/en/seminars/> Contact: Ellen Liu, [eliu@sorosny.org](mailto:eliu@sorosny.org)

### ***Capacity Building:***

#### **Empowering African Researchers Through Fellowships for Public Health and Policy Research**

The HIV/AIDS and Civil Society Project funded the Social Science Research Council's African fellowship program for public health and policy research on care-giving for HIV and AIDS and on the links between sexual violence and HIV and AIDS. The program aims to empower African researchers to develop policy and program strategies based on priorities they have identified, as well as incorporate science and policy lessons from around the world. Focusing on two critically under-addressed issues, the program seeks to promote the development of effective HIV and AIDS responses that are understood and evaluated locally. The program will include mentorship and regional collaboration through joint learning initiatives, helping African researchers to forge strong relationships with the international research community. Contact: Heather Doyle, [hdoyle@sorosny.org](mailto:hdoyle@sorosny.org)

### **Targeting Palliative Care Needs in Southeast Asia**

International Palliative Care Initiative funded a new Palliative Care Resource Training Center for Healthcare Professionals based at the National Cancer Center of Singapore. Palliative care doctors and nurses from the Asia Pacific region will travel to low-resource Southeast Asian countries to provide didactic and clinical training. Individuals will also come to Singapore for training on in-patient and out-patient palliative care, hospice home care, and development and management of a home care, hospice, or in-patient palliative care program. Contact: Sophie Pinkham, [spinkham@sorosny.org](mailto:spinkham@sorosny.org)

### **Romanian Hospice Casa Sperantei Provides Training for Palliative Clinical Care and Advocacy**

Following the achievement of the Romanian Hospice Casa Sperantei in working with the Romanian government to rewrite legislation on drug availability for pain management, the International Palliative Care Initiative (IPCI) will fund Hospice Casa Sperantei in 2006 to educate doctors and regulators on the new laws and on pain management. IPCI also funded Hospice Casa Sperantei's seminar series offering clinical and advocacy training for palliative care professionals from Central, Eastern, and Southern Europe and the former Soviet Union. These seminars will build regional networks and help other countries learn from Romania's success. Contact: Sophie Pinkham, [spinkham@sorosny.org](mailto:spinkham@sorosny.org)

### **Inaugural International HIV/AIDS Palliative Care Fellowship Awarded to Vietnamese Clinician**

OSI and the International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care (IAPAC) have awarded the OSI-IAPAC International Fellowship in HIV/AIDS Palliative Care to Bui Thi Bich Thuy, chair of the Department of Infectious Diseases at the Haiphong Medical School in Haiphong, Vietnam. Dr. Thuy's one-year fellowship will focus on pain management in intravenous drug using HIV-positive patients. Another call for fellowship applications will be announced mid-year. Contact: Sophie Pinkham, [spinkham@sorosny.org](mailto:spinkham@sorosny.org)

### **Other News and Announcements:**

#### **Welcome to New Director of OSI's Network Public Health Program**

In January, Francoise Girard was appointed the new Director of OSI's Network Public Health Program, based in New York. Ms. Girard previously worked for OSI from 1995 to 1999, serving for most of this period as regional director for the foundations in the Czech Republic, Slovakia, Romania, Moldova, Bulgaria, Albania, and Haiti. In 1999, she left OSI to become senior program officer for international policy at the International Women's Health Coalition. A lawyer by training, she has been extensively involved in writing on and advocating for women's health and sexual health at the global level and with UN agencies. Contact: Francoise Girard, [fgirard@sorosny.org](mailto:fgirard@sorosny.org)

#### **Welcome to New Law and Health Initiative Director**

In January, Jonathan Cohen joined OSI as Project Director of the Law and Health Initiative, based in New York. Mr. Cohen, formerly with Human Rights Watch's HIV/AIDS and Human Rights Program, has focused his research and advocacy on human rights abuses against people living with and at risk of HIV worldwide. In his new position, Mr. Cohen will guide the Law and Health Initiative in promoting civil society efforts to advance health and human rights through law and supporting legal advocacy on behalf of marginalized persons, legislative efforts to advance public health goals, and legal capacity building for health providers and their clients. Contact: Jonathan Cohen, [jcohen@sorosny.org](mailto:jcohen@sorosny.org)

#### **Access to Health Care for Roma is the Strategic Priority for Roma Health Project in 2006**

The Roma Health Project held a Technical Advisory Committee meeting in February to discuss strategic approaches and activities for 2006. Access to health care for Roma was identified as the project's main policy agenda. Four countries were identified as focal countries - Serbia, Macedonia, Romania, and Bulgaria. The project will work with partners and the European Union to identify appropriate forums at the EU level to publicize and advocate around the report, *Mediating Romani Health: Policy and Program Opportunities*. Additionally, a comprehensive mapping will be conducted to assess the current state of Romani communities' access to health care in the focus countries. Following the assessment, the project will provide capacity building and small grants to address obstacles and challenges to access to health care for Roma. Contact: Cristi Mihalache, [cmihalache@osi.hu](mailto:cmihalache@osi.hu)

### **Forging Alliances on Sexual Health and Rights in Central and Eastern Europe**

On November 11-12, ASTRA, the Central and Eastern European Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, convened a variety of stakeholders from across Europe to discuss the intersection of reproductive health, sexual rights, and HIV. Supported by SHARP and other partners, the meeting built networks for communication and forged alliances among diverse advocates and NGOs with overlapping constituencies. It also provided a forum for the sharing of perspectives from service providers and human rights advocates. A common theme was how AIDS activists can build off successes of reproductive/sexual health and rights communities and vice versa. For conference agenda and details, see <http://health.osf.lt/en/seminars/> Contact: Heather Doyle, [hdoyle@sorosny.org](mailto:hdoyle@sorosny.org)

### **Galvanizing Donor Community Support for Sexual Health and Rights Issues**

SHARP continues to look for opportunities to galvanize support and raise visibility on the sexual health and rights needs of socially marginalized populations. In October 2005, SHARP joined more than 70 donors working on international and domestic issues related to sexual and reproductive health at the annual meeting of the Funders Network on Population, Reproductive Health and Rights in Cuernavaca, Mexico. Highlights of the meeting included sessions addressing scaling up innovative service models, integrating HIV prevention, treatment, and care into sexual/reproductive health programs, and assessing the impact of religion. Contact: Sue Simon, [ssimon@sorosny.org](mailto:ssimon@sorosny.org)

### **Strategy and Funding Development Meetings for Tobacco Control Policy Initiative**

The Tobacco Control Policy Initiative held a series of strategy development meetings in New York on January 24-26, 2006. Harm reduction and tobacco control advocates worked toward establishing common ground between the two communities; the discussion generated a list of action items further exploring the issue of tobacco harm reduction. In a second meeting, the Tobacco Control Policy Initiative's Technical Advisory Committee convened to refine the initiative's global tobacco control strategy. Finally, the initiative hosted a gathering of bilateral and multilateral tobacco control donor organizations to promote greater coordination of activity and develop next steps for catalyzing additional funding for tobacco control. These meetings will inform the initiative's strategy in 2006 and beyond. Contact: Sauyeh Jahann, [sjahann@sorosny.org](mailto:sjahann@sorosny.org)

### **Upcoming Events:**

From March 6-10, Public Health Watch's five TB researchers from Bangladesh, Brazil, Nigeria, Tanzania, and Thailand will attend an advocacy workshop at OSI-New York and a series of advocacy meetings in Washington, D.C. Events include briefings for members of the U.S. Congress, meetings with TB and HIV/AIDS policymakers at USAID, and a forum hosted by the Global Health Council featuring the five researchers. The forum will be webcast at: [www.kaisernetwork.org/health\\_cast/hcast\\_index.cfm](http://www.kaisernetwork.org/health_cast/hcast_index.cfm) Contact: Emily Bell, [ebell@sorosny.org](mailto:ebell@sorosny.org)

The annual Network Public Health Program Partners Meeting will be held this year in Moscow from May 12 to 14 at the Hotel Cosmos. The meeting will highlight the policy priorities and successes of the Soros foundations over the year. Among the participants are national foundation executive directors and public health coordinators, OSI policy office representatives, network program directors, OSI senior management and OSI Network Public Health Program staff. The meeting is by invitation only. Contact: Ellen Liu, [eliu@sorosny.org](mailto:eliu@sorosny.org)